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SENSITIVE

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SUBJECT: OFFICIAL INFORMAL NUMBER 041 (03/15/04)

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PROTECT ACCORDINGLY.

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- CUBAN OFFICIAL TO SPEAK AT SL INSTITUTE
- ELECTION ASSISTANCE

PRESIDENT'S NATIONAL TV ADDRESS

1. (SBU) FYI. In a pre-recorded campaign speech televised on the evening of March 14, President Chandrika Kumaratunga addressed the nation in Sinhala, railing against the United National Party (UNP) government and promoting the election manifesto of her United Party Freedom Alliance (UPFA). In attacking the UNP, the President stated that in its two years in charge of the government, it had undone all the social and economic advances of her earlier (1994-2001) People's Alliance (PA) government. In general terms -- and after criticizing the PM's handling of the peace process, she also stated that she was in favor of peace and talks.

2. (SBU) As noted above, the President took the opportunity in the speech to stump for her UPFA -- the technical name for the SLFP-JVP alliance -- election manifesto, which was made public on March 11 (see Colombo 446). Following are some highlights of the manifesto:

-- Under "Constitutional Reforms," the Alliance proposes the formation of a constituent assembly to develop a new constitution that will replace the executive presidency with a cabinet, parliament, and new electoral system.

-- Under the third point, "To settle the National Problem and restore lasting peace with dignity in Sri Lanka," the manifesto states that the ceasefire (with the LTTE) will continue and "steps will be taken to enter into a process of negotiation with the LTTE and other groups to bring about on reasonable conditions, a sustainable solution." The manifesto also rejects separatism and violence, calling for a solution that would safeguard the "unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka."

-- Under "Rehabilitation and Reconstruction in the North and the East," the Alliance recognizes the need for urgent relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction and calls for changes in the related "Triple R" ministry to accelerate the assistance programs in these areas.

-- Under "New Economic order for a Strong National economy," which comprises roughly one-third of the entire manifesto, the Alliance describes a "new economic order built up through the competitive participation of a strong private sector and strong public sector...based on well-managed foreign investment incentives and promotion of local industries and enterprises." FYI: You will see our frontchannel in the coming days on the economy and the elections. (POL/ECON)

CUBAN OFFICIAL TO SPEAK AT SL INSTITUTE

3. (SBU) FYI. On March 11, Mission received an invitation to a lecture being held at the Sri Lanka Institute of International Relations. The scheduled lecturer for the March 17 session is Manuel Aguilera de la Paz, the Cuban Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs. De la Paz's talk, entitled "Foreign Policy of Cuba in a Unipolar World," is being co-hosted by the Institute and the Cuban Embassy. Just wanted to flag this lecture, which is being given pride of place at the Sri Lankan MFA's official institute. (POL)

ELECTION ASSISTANCE

4. (SBU) We are organizing a press conference for Wednesday morning at which the Ambassador will announce our significant package of election assistance. (DCM)

